

## BOOK REVIEW

### *LESSON PLANS* FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION

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#### **Lesson Plans: The Institutional Demands of Becoming a Teacher**

By Judson G. Everitt (Rutgers University Press, 2017)

One of the great challenges of research in professional socialization has been to move the field away from analyses that focus narrowly on identity change in neophytes. While this is an exciting and worthwhile project, it is easy to inadvertently conduct the same analysis over and over again, applying different theoretical lenses to investigate different aspects of the process. Another downside is that this research tradition has never allowed for strong warrants for doing work on professional socialization because the processes are generally not linked to broader changes in professional culture, policy, or broader national culture. The development of inhabited institutions as a symbolic interactionist approach to understanding the interplay of institutions, organizations, and microsocial action is an enormous boon to the sociology of

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professions, and *Lesson Plans: The Institutional Demands of Becoming a Teacher* is an apt lesson in bringing these approaches together.

*Lesson Plans* is an ethnographic investigation of a university-based teacher education program at a flagship state university in the Midwestern United States. Drawing on observations at the university and at student teacher placement sites, as well as interviews—all over the course of more than 15 months—Everitt examines how teacher candidates develop their skills and self-understandings through participating in formal training and student teaching.

By theorizing sources of tight and loose coupling in schools, Everitt demonstrates how educational policies like No Child Left Behind are not simply oppressive in a way that positions teachers as mere agents of the policy. Rather, teachers actively fashion their styles and approaches to teaching. Everitt marshals interview data to show that the teacher candidates can narratively account for their plans and actions, and he takes advantage of the reflexivity that their professional training promotes to investigate how teacher candidates decide to act in the classroom. This is a clever empirical move because it allows us to understand the extent to which students are acting based on formal education, feedback from supervising teachers, and formal state standards, which then allows Everitt to develop an empirical understanding of how closely the broader policy environment is linked to the everyday lived reality of the teacher candidates.

This is a key contribution of Everitt's work: he exposes how these levels are linked and how they come to bear on the everyday lives of teacher candidates, such that their active self-fashioning is contextualized at the same time as it is theorized. His work dovetails with an

important finding in studies of professional socialization in medicine: that what appears as deprofessionalization, even in a structural sense, can be significantly mitigated by the individual actions of professionals, who will maintain autonomy of their domains to the maximum extent possible, creatively reinterpreting formal policies to do so.

Everitt's analysis also transcends one of the fatal flaws of analyses of professional socialization, which is to under-emphasize the role of authority figures in shaping the socialization process. Analyses that do not examine how authority figures hold trainees accountable to professional standards can make professional socialization appear as if it has happened by individual initiative or passive osmosis. Everitt avoids this by robustly incorporating formal education and informal interactions with faculty and supervising teachers in his analysis.

Like any thought-provoking analysis, *Lesson Plans* opens up areas for future research. One of the biggest areas to be addressed within professional socialization is the internal stratification of trainees. This lacuna exists because sociologists of professional socialization have tended to theorize the middle of the group rather than the margins, in our attempts to outline dominant organizational logics, professional norms, and common educational processes. Often, our aim is like Everitt's: to understand how the broader policy context shapes both the educational context and the workplace. There are two areas where future work could pick up where Everitt has already laid the foundation.

First, near the end of the book, Everitt explores the implications for inequality of the interplay between accountability pressures and compulsory education. Citing work by Annette Lareau, Jessica Calarco and Laura Hamilton, Everitt shows how parents can secure accommodations for their children by appealing to the values of constructivist pedagogy, namely that children should be considered individuals whose strengths and weaknesses are accommodated by teachers. Not surprisingly in the context of past research, it is middle and upper-middle class parents who frequently make these appeals and their children who accrue the benefits.

However, even though his analysis focused on teacher candidates, and only indirectly at the students they teach, Everitt leaves out an analysis of the effects of inequality among teacher candidates. This is driven by the population of the teacher's college at State University, which Everitt describes as, "predominantly women; they are white middle-class; they are local to the region where they trained and planned to work" (p. 21). Although Everitt finds no reason to believe that his sample is idiosyncratic, future development of his theories would benefit from being investigated in racially and ethnically diverse settings.

Second, gender is a prominent focus of the analysis in *Lesson Plans*. Everitt goes beyond theorizing gender as a social category; instead, he conceptualizes gender as a social institution that is actively inhabited by teacher candidates. This leads men and women teacher candidates to differentiate their styles in ways that play nicely with traditional gender expectations. In light of his work, a possibility for future analyses of inequality would be to look at how traditional

gender expectations pose difficulties for teacher candidates who do not conform to traditional gender roles.

While Everitt's study should not bear the responsibility of dealing with every empirical eventuality, scholars in the fields of education, symbolic interactionism and professional socialization have a continuing warrant for more work like his in the future. *Lesson Plans* is a much-needed addition to the body of work on professional socialization, and can be taught both for its topical focus as well as an example of how to use qualitative data to construct arguments that link levels of analysis.

#### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR(S)

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